

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Repair not repeat – Nova Scotia’s Information and Privacy Commissioner releases 2022-2023 Annual Report

HALIFAX – Today, Tricia Ralph, Nova Scotia’s Information and Privacy Commissioner, released her annual report for 2022-2023.

Access to information is a crucial component of democracy. It helps citizens understand government decision-making and gives the public a means to hold their governments accountable. It can also serve to deepen trust among citizens and their governments. “Fulsome and meaningful access to information is key to combatting the rise of misinformation and disinformation present in the digital age,” says Commissioner Ralph.

When governments deny applicants access to the information they request, applicants can ask the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) to review whether that denial complies with access to information laws. The OIPC’s persistent backlog means that applicants are waiting upwards of four years to have their reviews initiated. “In order to effectively participate in democracy, Nova Scotians need *timely* access to information about their governments,” says Commissioner Ralph. “Applicants want and need disclosure while the information is still relevant. Waiting more than four years for independent review of governments’ decisions to refuse access to information is simply too long.” The OIPC’s requests for additional staffing were again rejected this year. The OIPC needs more resources to effectively fulfil its mandate. Absent additional permanent staffing, the backlog will continue to grow.

Modernized access to information and privacy laws are also key to a well-functioning democratic society. Nova Scotia’s *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* has not been substantively updated since its creation in 1993 – 30 years ago. The digital age has profoundly progressed since that time, but Nova Scotia’s laws have not done the same. Nova Scotia’s laws are not up to the task of responding to the significant digital advances that have been made. The Commissioner once again recommends that the Nova Scotia Government follow through with its promise to modernize Nova Scotia’s dated access to information and privacy laws.

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